

poised prosperity to that society, and said, with respect to St. Mary's, Redcliffe,—"The citizens of Bristol had shown a determination to restore to its pristine beauty that magnificent building in which they had that day met for public worship. It was to the lasting honour of Bristol that men engaged daily in the earnest pursuit of the business of life should form themselves into a society to restore that edifice to perfection, and he would say that it was a noble and an English undertaking. They had had read to them that day a paper, which showed them how, through consecutive generations, the citizens of this ancient city had distinguished themselves by beautifying and perfecting various edifices. Then came a long period of carelessness and negligence, in which, like spendthrifts, they suffered that which their ancestors had handed down to them to waste under their hands. Thank God, they now lived in a better time, when men showed they would restore the wrecks of many generations, and thus do honour to God and to His church. He could not help thinking, even taking the very low ground of expediency, that more was done to promote the great object of church restoration by thoroughly doing a work of this kind, by proceeding without fear of cost and completing the beautiful work of the original, than by any less perfect means. By doing so they were only giving God his due, by producing beauty on every side, even in the desert island. He believed it was more to the purpose to restore thoroughly such an edifice as that than to build twenty poor and miserable churches."

The Report of the Committee said, "the works at Redcliffe Church, in progress at the last annual meeting of Canynge's Society; viz., the four clerestory windows of chancel, have been completed. The screen, dividing the lady chapel from the chancel, has likewise been restored; thus enabling the restoration committee to remove the temporary screen, which removal has produced an effect on the interior of the fabric most gratifying and encouraging. The necessity of completing the east window of the chancel is obvious and pressing, and your committee have much gratification in stating that the funds requisite for that purpose have been provided by Sir John Kerle Haberfeld, Mayor of Bristol; and Robert Phippen, Esq."

Mr. Proctor, the originator of the Society, was unfortunately prevented by illness from attending. The chairman, Mr. Harford, justly dwelt on the pains and time Mr. Proctor had devoted to the work.

The munificent "*Nil Desperandum*" was not forgotten.

Dr. Whewell, in replying for the Universities, made some very interesting comments on the title *Pendaxator*, prefixed to a name on a slab in Redcliffe Church, and usually translated "brewer." The doctor showed that it meant the public entertainer of a corporation or body.

Mr. Miles's collections at Leigh Court were visited, and at Blaise Castle, the seat of the president, Mr. Harford, we saw some very fine pictures, in a gallery admirably well lighted from the centre of the ceiling. The grounds here are perfectly beautiful."

THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF ANCIENT MONUMENTS.*

MR. FREEMAN commenced by saying that in one principle he trusted that all his hearers were heartily agreed: no hand, he hoped, of all that he saw around, would be held up against the general position that the remains of antiquity are to be guarded with jealous care, and that no innovation, no tampering with a single stone is to be admitted, unless manifestly demanded by the most paramount necessity. Somehow or other mankind had not uncommonly displayed a greater facility in pulling down than in setting up: the great father and founder of this school of art destroyed abbeys that he might establish bishoprics; and we need go no further than this city for proof that he found the former process considerably easier than the latter. Yet the great mediæval architects, whom we now feebly imitated, might properly be referred under that head, for no race of men were more regardless of the works of their ancestors, or swept away with a more ruthless hand the glorious productions of an early day. How rarely was a church of any pretensions met with which remained entirely as it came from the hands of the original architect! Even in the case of Westminster Abbey, although it was continued in the fifteenth century in a style which none but a technical observer of minute detail could distinguish from the original design, we should almost have preferred to have preserved to us the older structure, rude and unornamented as it may, by comparison, have been, instead of the divine fabric which arose from its ashes, and which the princely taste and bounty of a Henry and an Edward combined to rear. There was scarcely any space of time in the history of our greater churches in which some change or other had not been going on, and our ancestors seemed eagerly to have grasped the opportunity afforded by comparatively slight dilapidations to reconstruct portions to much greater extent than any necessity required. The fact was, that the mediæval architects stood in an entirely different position from that in which we do with regard to the erections of their predecessors. In their time the forms of Gothic architecture were still parts of a living whole; the religious and political sentiments of which they were the material expression were not extinct: the building to be destroyed did not at any period speak of an entirely past state of things. The total revolution of taste and sentiment which was the result of the Reformation had not yet taken place, and, the feeling of antiquity with which we are impressed in reference to mediæval structures having no existence then, they altered or sought to improve in the same spirit as we should deal with works of the last age. History and archaeology, too, had among them no existence: the ideas of literary or artistic property had not arisen: the prince or prelate transferred to himself the praise of the architect, whom he did but supply with his material means: the architect laboured for his own end, reckless of those who had gone before; just as the balladist and the chronicler appropriated, without scruple, whatever they found among the stores of their predecessors calculated to answer their own immediate purpose. As to how far the destructive propensities of mediæval architects might be subject of regret or otherwise at the present day, it must be admitted that if we have lost, through them, much that might have conduced to a direct study of art, we have gained, on the other hand, in the history of the successive changes which individual buildings have sustained, numerous sources of enthralling interest.

Turning now to the practical part of the subject, all present probably would agree, as an abstract proposition, in the canon laid down by a practical restorer of the day,—"Preserve as much as possible: destroy as little as possible." Yet when general principles were sought to be applied to particular cases, every shade of opinion would be found to exist. When the reaction of opinion in favour of mediæval architecture arose, and the state of too many of our churches led to efforts for

their restoration, the clergy were actuated by the highest motives in seeking to put the edifices entrusted to their care in a condition more meet for sacred purposes. Still the hasty setting about such good works, without sufficient knowledge and discretion, had issued in the unnecessary destruction of many valuable monuments of antiquity, and had brought not a few churches to a state from which the authors of their so-called restoration would now—if they could—be the first to rescue them. In many of our simple village churches the charm was not so much that of direct architectural beauty as one compounded of the sentiment of antiquity and of some inexpressible and (as it were) fortuitous result of picturesque grouping. Here unadvised restorations were more dangerous than anywhere else, and buildings of this class were precisely the places where that strange phantom called restoration, veiled in the garb of an angel of preservation, had had the most undivided sway. An old church, whose venerable simplicity was its only beauty, was to be tricked out with every conceivable prettiness or ugliness which had arisen in the brain of the worthy incumbent, whether consonant or not with the indications of the fabric, or the plainest rules of art and common sense. Then, too, there were the enormities of churchwardens' Grecian or Gothic! and, imbued with the same spirit of pseudo-restoration, guide-books were sometimes found to recommend that the process should be applied to buildings especially inappropriate for its reception, viz., military ruins. The result was a general distrust in many quarters against restoration, while by some it was absolutely forbidden. He would divide all antiquarian remains, architectural and otherwise, into two great classes, one of which he believed to be legitimate objects of restoration, while the other ought simply to be preserved from further injury. Some monuments of antiquity were valuable merely as antiquities, and were not applied at the present day to any purposes of practical utility: others were valuable as monuments, and were also actually applied to some modern purpose. The one class were objects for simple preservation, those in the other should be faithfully restored. Into the class of objects worthless to the practical man he would cast "hasbets of the stone period, battle-axes of the eleventh century, and rapiers of the seventeenth, Vatican MSS., Abingdon Missal, and Editions Principes; coins of Darius, Justinian, and Oliver Cromwell; the Nimrod sculptures, the Elgin marbles, and the cartoons of Raphael; the bell of St. Patrick, the spurs of Charlemagne, and the erowier of William of Wykeham: all he would hurl together in indiscriminate chaos, and finally proceed to crush them with the accumulated weight of Stooberge, Kii's Coty-house, Chepstow Castle, Tintern Abbey, and the Pyramids of Egypt." All these things were very interesting; some of them very beautiful: to the antiquary, the historian, the artist, each respectively was invaluable: all he said was, that to a plain, practical man they were all of no manner of use. Whatever value and interest these various kinds of objects possessed, irrespective of the purely æsthetic charm of many of them, was derived from their being the works of past ages: the least modern alteration at once destroyed their whole worth. Mr. Freeman then made an appeal in favour of preserving from the insidious assaults of the restorer the castles of mediæval times. Strange, indeed he said, is the conflict of emotions which they excite—admiration and awe, and hatred and gratitude. A thousand contradictory visions are conjured up at the very thought: their various portions may indeed call up pictures of very different periods in wild confusion: we may mingle up the iron warriors of the Conquest with the courtly chivalry of Cressy and Poitiers, but one general impression—that of the loftiest forms of heroism and magnanimity coupled in the same class, and even in the same man, with deeds of the blackest cruelty, may give a fair view of the whole period which the aged guardian of one of the noblest of feudal ruins felicitously designates as "castle times." We may set the

* The proceedings of the meeting were faithfully reported by the *Bristol Mercury*, *Bristol Times*, *Bristol Gazette*, *Bristol Mirror*, and *Pulse Parley*, though the last erroneously attributes Mr. Godwin's paper on "St. Mary's, Redcliffe," to Mr. Britton. The reporters complain bitterly of want of courtesy and attention on the part of the officers of the Institute. "Barly gentlemen who have so arduous a duty to perform as the reporters of the public papers, and to whom so much is owing, are entitled to consideration."

* Read by Mr. Freeman at Bristol.